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STATE BUDGET PASSESS WITH SIGNIFICANT NONPUBLIC SCHOOL ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING NEW SCHOOL SAFETY MEASURES

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (March 29, 2018) – The state operating and capital budgets passed by Maryland General Assembly this week include significant funding increases for Catholic and other nonpublic schools, specifically providing for additional school safety measures and scholarship assistance for low-income students and students with special needs.

The Nonpublic Aging Schools Program, which this year was named the “Senator James E. “Ed” DeGrange” program by members of the Senate, will now provide \$7 million for capital improvements to Catholic and other nonpublic schools as part of the fiscal year 2019 capital budget. The allocation will continue to provide \$3.5 million for deferred maintenance and infrastructure repairs and renovations, as well as an additional \$3.5 million to assist schools in making their schools safer for their students. Schools will receive funding for security upgrades on a per-pupil basis, with higher amounts going to schools with greater numbers of lower-income students.

“It is fitting that the program carries on Senator DeGrange’s name. He not only helped create it, but was also the one to ensure students in nonpublic schools were not forgotten when all of the discussion began surrounding school safety this session,” said Garrett O’Day, associate director for education, children and families at the Maryland Catholic Conference.

The Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST) Program, which provides scholarship assistance to low-income students, was funded for a third straight year at \$7.6 million, an increase of approximately \$1.6 million for this popular and growing program. For the upcoming school year, a portion of BOOST funding will be directed to assist students with special needs. Through this new provision, the BOOST Advisory Board, the body appointed by the state legislature to make BOOST scholarship award decisions, is afforded discretion to provide higher scholarship awards to students with special learning needs.

For the 2017-18 school year, the program saw a more than 50 percent increase in certified applications from its inaugural year. Moreover, there was increased demand from students seeking transfer from a public school, with more than 58% of new scholarship recipients having attended a public school last year. BOOST-recipient families collectively reported an average household income of just \$25,123 and 63% of recipients were minorities, including 40% African-American. English Language Learners made up 33% of BOOST recipients reported.

Students who attend Catholic and other nonpublic schools will continue to utilize the direct cost savings on textbook and technology costs through the Nonpublic Textbook and Technology Program which will continue to provide \$6 million in textbook and technology resources on loan from the state to their schools.

These programs have enjoyed bipartisan support throughout their existence, dating back to the initial authorization for the textbook program nearly two decades ago. However, Catholic and other nonpublic schools owe their greatest debt of gratitude to DeGrange, who will retire from the Maryland Senate at the end of this term. DeGrange fought tirelessly for nearly a decade for expanded educational options for low-income students through tuition assistance, eventually leading to the creation of the BOOST scholarship program in the 2016 legislative session. Thus far, BOOST has provided over \$11 million for over 5,000 scholarships to low-income students statewide.

The Maryland Catholic Conference and the Maryland Council for American Private Education (Maryland CAPE), the state's coalition of nonpublic schools, recently recognized DeGrange for his long term support for all students in Maryland. At the Catholic Conference's annual Catholics in Annapolis in February, Archbishop William Lori, Archbishop of Baltimore and chairman of the Maryland Catholic Conference, presented DeGrange with an honorary archdiocesan medal. Maryland CAPE followed with the presentation of a Career Appreciation Award to DeGrange, the organization's highest honor signifying an individual's commitment to all of Maryland's children, before nearly 1,100 students and administrators attending its annual Advocacy Day in Annapolis earlier this month.

Mary Ellen Russell, Maryland Catholic Conference executive director remarked, "A thousand awards wouldn't sufficiently honor the leadership Senator DeGrange has provided as a member of the Maryland Senate. His efforts will have a lasting effect on the lives of students throughout Maryland in both public and nonpublic schools. He has been a tireless and dedicated public servant for the people of Maryland, as well as a dear friend to the Church and so many others in Annapolis."